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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 001188

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SUBJECT: DAS YAMAMOTO MEETING WITH PM MELES: BORDER AND
BUILDING DEMOCRACY

REF: ADDIS 1160

Classified By: CHARGE JANET WILGUS FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi told DAS Don Yamamoto on April 22 that Ethiopia will participate in the next Ethiopia-Eritrean Border Commission (EEBC) meeting in order to keep the lines of communication open. He reiterated that Ethiopia accepts the EEBC decision without condition. The PM said that the government would do what it could to speed up the legal process for the detainees, although this also depends on their actions in court. As for the hardline opposition Ethiopian Diaspora, its aim is to remove the ruling EPRDF party from power, he said, and it will not tolerate those who engage in the political process. PM Meles and his economic team will meet with bilateral Addis-based donors on May 8. End summary.

¶2. (C) DAS Yamamoto accompanied by Charg Wilgus called on Prime Minister Meles on April 22. The discussion focused on the border and on the internal situation.

Border - we will stay engaged

¶3. (C) DAS Yamamoto expressed deep appreciation for Ethiopian participation in the March EEBC meeting and informed the PM that the EEBC has decided that in the demarcation process "nothing will be decided until everything is decided;" the survey can proceed but all problems will be resolved after the completion of the survey. Demarcation must lead to last peace, DAS Yamamoto emphasized, and not plant the seeds of another war. The PM said that Ethiopia has made a "strategic decision" to keep the lines of communication open through the EEBC process, and will therefore attend the next meeting in London when it is rescheduled. PM said that he does not expect much progress at this point as clearly stated that Ethiopia has accepted the EEBC boundary decision without any conditions. (Note: In a separate meeting, State Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Tekeda Alemu said that Ethiopia Ambassador to Geneva, Fisseha Yirma (former Director of Americas and Europe at the MFA; bio forward to AF/E) would represent Ethiopia at the talks. Dr. Tekeda stated that the November 2004 Five-Point Peace Plan is "not a stumbling block" to achieving peace on the border. There are "no insurmountable problems," he said; Isaias is capable of a U-turn when he is ready. End note.)

Progress on democracy

15. (C) DAS Yamamoto pressed the PM for the resolution of the continued detention of journalists, members of civil society, and the opposition CUD leadership, which he characterized as "a lightening rod" that detracts from the ultimate goal of democratic progress. Meles said that while the government would do what it could to speed up the legal process, including finding judges that would be helpful, the detainees themselves might seek to delay the trial. Citing studies on parliamentary procedure, the National Electoral Board, and the draft media law, the PM stated that the government is building democratic institutions for the sake of the country, to keep the political process underway. Those who have rejected the process thus far can join in when they are ready, he said.

16. (C) In discussing the role of the increasingly strident hardline opposition Ethiopian Diaspora in the U.S., the PM stated that it is working under the illusion that the EPRDF will be removed from power relatively soon. They will not tolerate those who are reengaging in the political process and are trying to "maximize the damage" and cripple the EPRDF by getting the World Bank to withhold financial support and Congress to make resolutions, etc.

17. (C) PM Meles told DAS Yamamoto that he would be opening a dialogue with the donor community in Addis in order to explain the EPRDF views. Although EPRDF information is widely available, he said, the donors tend to rely on third party analysis from consultants. (Note: Bilateral donors (but not multilateral, such as the World Bank) have been invited to a meeting with the PM on May 8, which will include his economic team: Newai Gebre-Ab, Economic Advisor to the PM; Tefera Waluwa, Minister of Capacity Building; Sufian

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Ahmed, Minister of Finance; and Mekonnen Manyazewal, State Minister of Finance for Development Planning. End note.)

18. (U) DAS Yamamoto cleared this cable.

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